



TETRA TECH, INC.

March 8, 2004

Mr. David Aguilar
U.S. Border Patrol, Tucson Sector
1970 West Ajo Way
Tucson, AZ 85713

Subject: Proposed Tucson Electric Power Transmission Line near Nogales, Arizona

Dear Mr. Aguilar:

Tetra Tech is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) for a proposed Tucson Electric Power (TEP) transmission line that would cross the U.S.-Mexico border near Nogales, Arizona. The EIS is being prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy, in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission. As part of our analysis, we are seeking input from the U.S. Border Patrol regarding ongoing and planned future activities, and potential impacts of the proposed transmission line. We previously sent letters to Rob Daniels of the U.S. Border Patrol (April 3, 2002) and Shawn Palmer (June 27, 2002) but have not received any response. We have been provided your name as an additional point of contact by the Coronado National Forest. Below is a basic description of TEP's proposed project, and a list of specific questions for the U.S. Border Patrol. We would be happy to provide additional details as needed for your consideration.

The transmission line would extend south from Sahuarita, Arizona for approximately 60 miles, crossing the U.S.-Mexico border west of Nogales, Arizona and continuing into Mexico. The proposed transmission line border crossing is approximately 3,300 ft west of Arizona State Highway 189, in the vicinity of an El Paso Natural Gas Company pipeline within Section 24, Township 24 South, Range 13 East. The double-circuit 345-kV line would be strung on a single set of support structures approximately 140 feet high, within a 125-ft wide right-of-way. During construction, new access roads would be built where no access currently exists and some existing roads would be closed in an effort to mitigate overall project impacts on National Forest land. Upon completion of construction, roads that would not be used for ongoing maintenance would be closed. Remnants of closed roadways would not provide a single continuous pathway from the U.S.-Mexico border. To restrict access to maintenance roads, TEP would place barriers, boulders, fences, or locked gates across the maintenance roads as needed to meet the requirements of the Coronado National Forest or private landowners.

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Project information, including a copy of the Draft EIS, can be found on DOE's project website, at <http://www.ttclients.com/tep>. The website also includes a map of the study corridors that are analyzed in the Draft EIS as potential locations for the transmission line ROW. Note that each alternative has the same location for crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, as described above.

Specifically, please provide answers to the following:

- Describe in general terms the ongoing operations of the U.S. Border Patrol in the area between Interstate 19 (I-19) and Sycamore Canyon (west of I-19) in the Coronado National Forest.
- Describe any future changes in activities or other projects that the U.S. Border Patrol has planned in the project area.
- State whether the proposed project is likely to affect illegal immigration, drug-related activities, and/or your operations.

Please provide responses to the specific questions above by March 22, 2004. If you have other additional comments on the Draft EIS (attached), those could be provided to DOE at a later date, if necessary, and those comments will also be considered to the extent feasible in preparation of the Final EIS. Your prompt attention to this matter is appreciated, as publishing of a Final EIS is scheduled for mid-2004. If you have any questions, please call me at (703) 931-9301, or e-mail me at mark.blauer@tetrattech.com.

Sincerely,

H. Mark Blauer Ph.D.
EIS Project Manager

cc: Gilbert Estrada, U.S. Border Patrol
Ed Beck, Tucson Electric Power Company
Dr. Jerry Pell, U.S. Department of Energy

NO4-016

**Department of Homeland Security
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection
Office of Border Patrol
OBP 10/9.2.6**

Office of the Chief Patrol Agent
1970 W. Ajo Way
Tucson, AZ 85713

March 29, 2004

Mr. H. Mark Blauer
Tetra Tech, INC.
5205 Leesburg Pike, Suite 1400
Church Falls, VA 220415

Dear Mr. Bauer,

The Tucson Sector Office of Border Patrol submits the following comments in reference to Tetra Tech's questions to the proposed Tucson Electric Power Sahuarita-Nogales Transmission Line:

- 1) Typical operations on the Coronado National Forest between Interstate 19 and Sycamore Canyon (west) are comprised of normal patrol operations and traffic operations on Ruby Road. The Nogales station traditionally patrolled to the area known as Bear Valley. The majority of the traffic in this area is foot traffic with limited vehicular traffic that loads out on Ruby Road and travels either east to Interstate 19 or west to the town of Ruby and on to Arivaca. An increase in vehicular traffic is anticipated with the introduction of a North-South roadway system in this area.
- 2) The Border Patrol is expecting an increase in the amount of patrol operations in this area. There are currently plans to expand the current Remote Video Surveillance System (RVSS) to the west of Nogales. The current plans will expand onto U.S. Forest Service property. The preliminary planning stages for a road project are underway to construct an East-West road out toward the Pena Blanca Lake area. Without knowing exactly where the proposed power line will be constructed, I am concerned that the proposed power line will conflict with our proposed RVSS sites on the West side of Nogales. I am assuming that the proposed power line will be on top of one of the ridgelines that cross the international border. The Border Patrol currently has two proposed RVSS sites on top of the ridgelines just west of the Mariposa Commercial Truck Gate. Looking at pages S-4 of the July 2003 Draft EIS, it appears as the power line will be constructed on a proposed RVSS site.
- 3) This project will have an impact on smuggling trends and affect Border Patrol operations. There will be an increase in the amount of illegal traffic through the West side of Nogales. This is expected as a result of road construction necessary for the proposed power line and the increase of Border Patrol resources in the West Desert. As Border

Patrol increases it's resources on the West Desert, it is expected that smugglers will move their operations to other areas, with the west side of Nogales expected to be one of those areas. The construction of roads to install and maintain the power lines will be a major draw to alien and narcotic smugglers. These roads, even if access is secured with gates, will provide egress away from the border to the smugglers. This will in fact, will cause an increase in the amount of illegal traffic through the Coronado National Forest. Whether or not a single route of egress is created, the construction of the power line will create a roadway system that will be utilized by smugglers. The smugglers may use short portions of the power line maintenance road to access an existing road or drive cross country to access an existing road.

- 4) The proposed construction of the power line might also be in the immediate vicinity of the Nogales station firing range or actually be constructed over the firing range.

I am confident that illegal alien and narcotic smuggling will increase with the construction of the power line maintenance road. Even if this is not a single continuous road leading north, this route of egress will necessitate the Border Patrol to increase it's presence in the Coronado National Forest. When the power line maintenance road is constructed, the Border Patrol is requesting access to the road for operational needs.

If further discussion on this matter is needed, please feel free to contact Gilbert Estrada, Senior Tactical Coordinator at (520) 584-4006 or Field Operations Supervisor Todd Jewell at (520) 377-6017

Respectively submitted,

for Gilbert Estrada
David V. Aguilar
Chief Patrol Agent